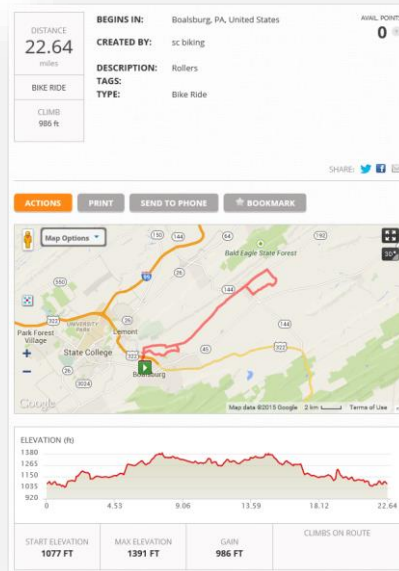


## CHAPTER 5 DESIGN FEASIBILITY- what is the community's vision for this trail?

*"Every five years, states across the nation are required to produce a new statewide recreation plan to remain eligible to receive federal Land and Water Conservation funds. The plan guides outdoor recreation programs, policies and projects. Work on the 2014-19 Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan began in 2012 and kicked off officially in 2013 with the formation of a 41-member Technical Advisory Committee. With representation from state, federal and local governments and recreation and conservation organizations, the committee organized themes, reviewed research and developed actions for the future. Work on the plan wrapped up in December 2014, and a final plan will be available in the spring 2015."* (Summary from the **PA Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**)

The centerpiece of PA's statewide recreation plan is a survey of over 10,000 of the state's citizens and recreation providers offering "insights into what Pennsylvanians want to do, where they go and what they value in their outdoor recreation lives. According to that survey, ¾ of respondents were actively engaged in outdoor recreation, with over half of them (53%) one or more times a week. About ¾ of the respondents to the state survey listed walking as their primary outdoor activity, validating the high percentage of people we surveyed (80%) who said they would use a rail trail in Penns and Brush Valley for walking. The Penns and Brush valleys region is also becoming a preferred destination for riders of both skinny (on road) and fat tire (off road) bikes, with on road venues like PASA's Bike Fresh Bike Local race that attracted over 300 cyclists for a 25, 50 or 75 mile on road event in 2013, or the Bald Eagle State Forest's Wilderness 101 annual off road extreme mountain bike endurance event that attracts 200 to 300 riders from all over the country. While these once-a-year rigorously planned and choreographed events demonstrate the region's attractiveness as a destination for serious cycling enthusiasts, it's the growing demand for places where the general public can safely walk, bike, hike, visit a neighbor, watch wildlife, cross country ski, snowshoe, ride a horse, fish or hunt that led many leaders of this community on a search for a safe alternative to the region's heavily traveled roads and highways. Unfortunately, their vision of a 27 mile destination type trail through Centre County connecting the college communities of State College and Bucknell via the buffalo Valley Rail Trail was not supported by a majority of the landowners who now control the right of way. Concerns about privacy, liability and the right of property owners to decide what is the best use of their land overshadowed the vision of a linear park winding its way through the valleys and the gap through the mountains beyond them. But the same robust public process that exposed those concerns also revealed several areas where landowners continue to express interest in exploring community based trails designed principally to serve the needs of their local communities. The vision for each of those trails is described on the following pages.



## LEMONT TO OAK HALL

A dedicated bike route between Lemont and Penns Valley has long been a dream of local cycling enthusiasts, many of whom share their journeys on the popular *Map My Ride* website (see example on previous page). The Lemont to Linden Hall segment was initially envisioned as a gateway for the 27 mile trail leading from Lemont, a bedroom community for nearby State College, to Penns Valley via Upper Brush valley on the abandoned L&T, with connections to Penn State along the trail in Slab Cabin Park at the west end, and connections east of Lemont to Nittany Orchard Park, the Oak Hall Regional Park in Oak Hall, and The Linden Hall Village Association's park along the railbed in Linden Hall. Although this early vision of a "gateway to the valleys" was set aside after many key landowners expressed their concern that a rail trail might change the rural character that inspired them to live in or move to the country, or just did not fit their vision for the use of their land at this time, a rail trail between the bedroom communities of Lemont, Oak Hall and Boalsburg might still be feasible as a longer term prospect for a community based trail.

The villages of Lemont, Oak Hall and Boalsburg are presently connected by the narrow and winding Old Boalsburg Road designed and built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for horse drawn wagons and carriages but shared today with little improvement by cyclists, runners, commuters and massive trucks hauling crushed limestone from the Oak Hall quarry. A community based trail connecting the villages of Lemont, Oak Hall and Boalsburg would allow people to slow down enough to appreciate the richness of these three quintessentially American villages while providing an attractive alternative commuter route for Penn State's environmentally oriented students, professors, administrators and scientists.

The western terminus of the railbed in the Village Green in Lemont is set against the backdrop of John Thompson's historic coalshed and granary restored by the community and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The post office across the street offers a great location for a trailhead with ample parking and plans for an outdoor restroom. Trail amenities like snacks, water, coffee and ice cream are available for sale near the Village Green and Granary, the focal point for a 4 season offering of community and regional gatherings hosted by the Lemont Village Association-- including a strawberry festival in the spring, farmers market in the summer, gourmet dinner in the fall and Kriskindle Market in the winter.



Like Lemont, Oak Hall is a charming hamlet that, although eviscerated by the highway when the 322 Bypass was constructed, nevertheless retains much of its historic charm and character. The picturesque village includes a tiny, quaint restored log house sitting next to a limestone mill repurposed as a home by one of the country's foremost trout anglers. Champion Clydesdales roam the pastures of Biddle's historic Oak Hall Farm, its limestone mansion decorated with period wrought iron filigree that more than likely came from one of the Centre Regions famous 18<sup>th</sup> century ironworks. Boalsburg, with its oft contested but nevertheless dutifully celebrated claim as the birthplace of Memorial Day, and its quaint Diamond surrounded by small shops anchored by the historic and haunted Boalsburg Hotel, may be a more receptive terminus than Linden Hall for the eastern end of the trail serving commuters to Penn State. But a bike route connecting these three villages is not without its issues either. The railbed has been built over in Lemont at the intersection with Old Boalsburg Road, with plans for additional development on the railbed even closer to town. While those proposed plans include a sidewalk that will more than likely be dedicated to the township, the owner was not enthusiastic about revising those plans to accommodate the trail. The crossing at Old Boalsburg Road is also less than ideal for sight lines, and would need to be well marked to ensure safe passage for riders and automobiles. A section of the railbed east of Old Boalsburg Road has been removed to make way for a driveway, and although the present owners said they are not interested in a rail trail on their property now, the husband of the couple said it's also possible their children might be some day. The decking for the railroad bridge on the historic Dale House property is missing, but the foundations appear to be in good condition and suitable for lighter use as a trail. Continuing east to the quarry, which is posted with no trespassing signs, it's difficult to say for sure from aerial photos or observations from the public right of way if the railbed is still intact. The railbed passes through areas that have already been mined between the active quarry west of the railbed and the crusher east of the railbed, so it's not easy to imagine a safe route through the area at this time of active blasting and quarrying.

Although the landowners just east of the quarry sent a letter advising us that they are rail trail advocates, they also raised many reasonable concerns about how their section of the railbed would function as a trail on their property shoehorned between the road and the quarry. Those concerns, and possible solutions, include: 1. assurance from the trail manager that they would not be prevented from operating farm, heavy duty, and/or personal vehicles/equipment along the rail trail on that section of their property, a request that is typically granted in the language of the trail easement. 2. Proper signing of the crossing of the blind turn into their driveway to reduce the likelihood of accidents with pedestrians or bicyclists; 3. Proper signing to decrease the likelihood of vehicles parking along their driveway/yard in mistaken belief that it is available for those



wishing to use the path; 4. Fencing to reduce the possibility that increased traffic by their property will not result in theft and/or damage from/to their property; 5. Proper signing at the trail crossing on Old Boalsburg that is heavily traveled by large machinery and trucks from the quarry operation; 6. Fencing and signage to prevent illegal parking on private property the quarry owns across the street that trail users may mistake as available parking. 7. Development of proper trailheads with adequate parking to prevent people from parking on private property; and 8. Protocols for dealing with the enforcement of parking restrictions.

Like Linden Hall Road, Old Boalsburg Road is narrow and winding, with poor visibility compounded for the foreseeable future by the heavy truck traffic from the quarry. Although the tragic bicycle accident that killed the Penn State professor at the Oak Hall interchange with the 322 Bypass was not related to the quarry (as far as we could discover), the “ghost bike” memorial at the highway’s interchange with Old Boalsburg Road is a very visible and constant reminder highlighting the inadequacy of local roads designed for different times serving heavy truck traffic mixed with automobiles, cyclists and pedestrians.

**Given the uncertainty surrounding the future of the quarry, and the inadequacy of local roads to serve this region as a safe alternate route for pedestrians and cyclers, we have determined that the segment of railbed between Lemont and Oak Hall is not feasible at this time, but worthy of continued exploration.** We encourage advocates in this area to continue long range planning for a walkable bike friendly route between Lemont, Oak Hall and Boalsburg by:

1. Organizing a meeting of landowners who have already expressed an interest in or concerns about a trail on their property.
2. Establishing a committee to serve as trail advocates, or identify an organization with a track record of successful community engagement, like LVA , to serve as a champion for this long term possibility
3. Securing easements from railbed owners who support the concept of a rail trail on their land (see sample trail easement in Appendix \_\_\_\_).
4. Meeting with Oak Hall quarry owners to explore alternate routes through or around the quarry.
5. Meeting with Centre Region and Harris Township officials to explore ways to connect to the Oak Hall Regional Park’s loop trail
6. Meeting with PennDOT to make sure pedestrians and cyclists continue to be in the mix considered for the Oak Hall interchange.



# DDACT



## THE UPPER BRUSH VALLEY TRAIL AT RHONEYMEADE

If there is a segment along this abandoned railbed in Brush Valley with a hint of magic, it would have to be the 1.7 mile stretch of the L&T at the base of the hill below the straw bale guesthouse at Bergenblick's Scottish Highland Cattle Farm east of Smith Lane and the grounds of Dr. Richard Morgan's Rhoneymeade Farm sitting atop the knoll in the middle of this wide farming valley just west of Gregg Station Lane. Like the elaborate Labyrinth and sculpture garden maintained by James Leshner, Morgan's soft-spoken, hands-on caretaker and President of Rhoneymeade's Board of Directors, this stretch of railbed offers neighbors and the occasional visitor a gentle and quiet place to observe and absorb the natural beauty of this peaceful agrarian landscape against the backdrop of the stately brick home of one of the valley's most notable agriculturalists, Grange Fair founder Leonard Rhone.

We first met Dr. Morgan, the owner of Rhoneymeade Farm, at the invitation of James Leshner, who invited us to Rhoneymeade after the first public meeting for the rail trail. Morgan, a retired Penn State molecular biologist inspired by Francis Crick and James Watson, the scientists who discovered the double helical structure of the DNA molecule in 1953, earned his own spot in history by being the first landowner in Centre County to protect his land from encroaching development through a conservation easement donated to the Clearwater Conservancy. Morgan visualizes Rhoneymeade like Crick and Watson visualized DNA, but instead of a complex string of atoms elegantly woven around a pair of undulating axis, he sees flora and fauna intricately and intimately woven around and about undulations of the land. Morgan's ongoing interest in nature and 3-D modeling eventually led to the construction of a sculpture studio on the property, where he and invited artists carve sinuous shapes out of massive slabs of wood, many of them displayed on the grounds for visitors to enjoy during Rhoneymeade's summertime open house exhibits.

The arboretum, a creation of Morgan and Leshner, is the centerpiece of Rhoneymeade's outdoor sculpture garden. After touring the house and enjoying a brief concert on Morgan's grand piano, we met with Leshner and Morgan in the garden on a Spring day when the sun was still low enough on the horizon to cast long shadows at noon. Leshner's soft spoken manner is in sharp contrast to his chiseled features and calloused hands toughened by a career of working stone outdoors, yet his passion for Rhoneymeade and the possibilities of a rail trail connection come through loud and clear. Leshner shared his vision of connecting the 800 feet of railbed to the Grange Fairgrounds as a tribute to the region's agrarian heritage with us that day, and followed up with a statement he prepared for the November 19, 2013 public meeting:



*“Rhoneymeade enthusiastically supports a community based rail-trail along the Smith Lane to Gregg Station segment.*

*Rhoneymeade is a farm once owned by the founder of the Grange Fair, Leonard Rhone. It is located in Potter Township within the aforementioned segment identified in the feasibility study as having potential for a community based rail-trail. In fact, Rhoneymeade owns 800’ of railbed and has enjoyed keeping it clear to walk for 15 years. Neighbors walk on it, so, Rhoneymeade is ready to convey an easement to the cause.*

*Rhoneymeade was incorporated as a non-profit in 1989, in part, ‘to promote the scenic and natural beauty of the area.’ Its Board of Directors is bolstered by this fact and promoting a rail-trail – a nature trail across farm fields and along wooded Mackey Run- simply serves its purpose for the community.*

*Rhoneymeade was also incorporated to preserve the legacy of Leonard Rhone. Mr. Rhone was himself a champion for the railway in the 1880’s. Traveling with a committee to Philadelphia and urging the President of the PR to finish building what was then a stalled railroad, Rhone believed, as a grange leader, that the railroad was for the benefit of his farmer neighbors, his community. The Rhoneymeade directors are inspired by his actions and say, similarly, a rail trail will benefit our neighbors in our community.*

*How? At the heart of Rhoneymeade are the historic Rhone House, farmstead, and Arboretum, all which lay along the dog-legged, narrow country lane called Rimmey Road. Since Rhoneymeade’s founding, management has watched residents of Rimmey Road’s growing suburban culture walk the road’s scenic route. All the while, a little more commuter, agricultural and courier traffic drives a little faster, year to year. Though no official traffic data is available for Rimmey Road, other anecdotal evidence supports the claim of increased volume and speed.*

*Centre County government data does, however, provide population statistics. Currently, about 30% of Penns Valley’s population- the largest in Penns Valley- resides in Potter Township, where Rimmey Road lies. Projections are for Potter to still have the largest population by 2030, increasing 45%. Moreover, Centre Hall is projected to have the highest municipal density by then. Therefore, with inevitable development, more and faster modern traffic pressure can be expected on the narrow Rimmey Road. Say nothing about the effects this will have on the nearby, busier Brush Valley Rd which is used by walkers, joggers, and especially bicyclists, some of whom reside in the suburban neighborhood on Gregg Station Rd.. One can see, then, how a rail-trail will benefit neighbors in the community: by providing a safe and separate path for recreation.*

*While it is easy for Rhoneymeade to advocate a rail-trail, it is hard for some railbed owners and abutters to conceive of the public gaining access to the railbed. Trespassing and property damage occurs even now, even at Rhoneymeade. Liability concerns, privacy invasion, and trailheads threaten any trail’s feasibility.*

*To address these, Rhoneymeade will commit resources to ensure a possible rail-trail is built and maintained satisfactorily. It can promote trail user education, organize maintenance volunteers, and offer its welcome center for community meetings. T back up its enthusiasm, Rhoneymeade can provide a trail-head on the property and even a spur trail to the Arboretum. In short, Rhoneymeade look forward to taking a lead role in a community based rail-trail along the Smith Lane to Gregg Station segment.”*

*James Leshner-Rhoneymeade Inc.*



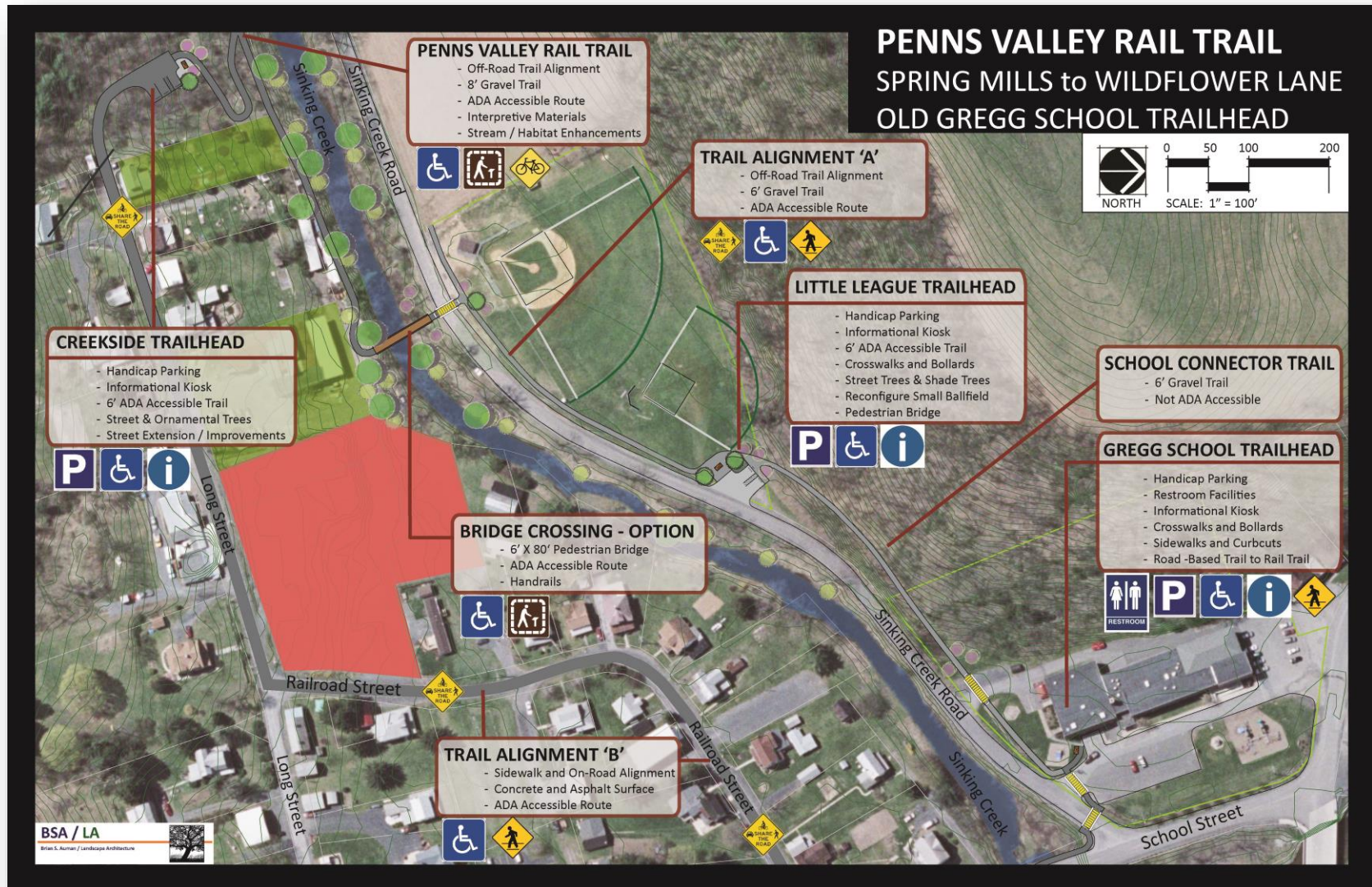
While a rail trail connection between the Grange Fair Grounds and Rhoneymeade, the home its founder, may not be feasible at the present time due to ag preservation easements on two farms and a pending application on a third farm on the railbed east of Gregg Station Lane, a rail trail connection to Rhoneymeade's western neighbor, Bergenblick Farm, offers a more promising possibility. The owners of Bergenblick Farm voiced strong support for the rail trail at the 1<sup>st</sup> public meeting, and agreed to host a follow-up meeting with DCNR and other trail advocates to discuss funding possibilities and next steps.

The vision for this 1.72 mile segment includes a trailhead at Bergenblick Farm just off Smith Lane or a trailhead on Rhoneymeade's land near the end of Gregg Station Lane. Both lanes are private, and would require the granting of easements by the neighbors. Trailhead facilities would be limited to a small parking area that includes one pervious handicapped parking space and a sign providing information on trail conditions (length, width, surface and grade conditions) in accordance with ADA standards. The 6 foot wide 2 way hiking trail would be limited to pedestrian use, mimicking as much as possible the look and feel of the 800 feet of railbed Leshner cleared and maintains west of Gregg Station Lane. 6-strand high tensile fencing would be installed to keep people on the trail and to keep cattle and bison off the railbed and out of the stream. Bollards and gates would be installed on the railbed on both sides of Rimmey Road to keep motorized vehicles off the railbed and to provide owners and abutters, maintenance and emergency vehicles access to the railbed. A spur trail on Rhoneymeade's land would connect the railbed to Rhoneymeade's Arboretum, studio and outdoor sculpture garden.

Issues that remain unresolved include:

1. Meeting with neighbor's to secure easements for access to trailheads and the missing links between Rhoneymeade Farm on the east end and Bergenblick Farm on the west end of the community based trail
2. Meeting with Clearwater Conservancy to confirm the location of the spur trail through land placed under conservation easement, and to explore funding options for streambank fencing.
3. Agreement on how the trail would be funded and maintained





## THE PENNS VALLEY TRAIL AT SPRING MILLS

If any person deserves to be recognized for getting the ball rolling on the idea of a rail trail on the abandoned L&T railbed in Penns Valley, it would be Jane Scheuchenzuber, a member of Gregg Township's planning commission. An avid equestrian, Jane's original vision for a trail serving the community of Spring Mills preceded the county's vision of a 27 mile connector trail by several years. It was her vision in fact that led us all back to the idea of exploring shorter community based trails designed principally to serve the recreational needs of local residents when it became clear that a continuous destination type trail was not feasible at this time. Jane was instrumental in securing trail easements for the Dickerson and Kauffman parcels in Spring Mills, and for getting the study committee for this project pulled together. Although she took a back seat once the study committee was established, her years of hard work earned the respect and support of the township supervisors and laid important groundwork for a trail in Spring Mills. That groundwork included gaining the support of two key landowners, the Myers brothers and Chris Kunes.

Although Don and his brother Joel Myers still grow crops on the family farm the abandoned L&T passes through, they also see the railbed as a potential asset to the community. Joel is an active member of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance, a group dedicated to rebuilding soil health by drilling instead of tilling the land, preserving the complex micro-rhizoid structure and microbial life beneath the soil that naturally captures and helps sequester carbon from the atmosphere as it converts sunlight into sugar that feeds the polyculture of crops they grow next to the railbed. Like fellow western PA No-Till farmer Calvin Ernst, who donated a lengthy railbed easement on his family farm for a rail trail near Meadville that now bears his family's name, the Myers see the repurposing of the L&T as a way of giving something back to their community.

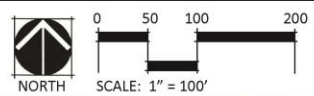
Like the Myers, developer Chris Kunes also sees the abandoned railbed as a vital piece of infrastructure for strengthening and rebuilding the Spring Mills community. Kunes owns about 1,800 feet of railbed between the Myers Farm and Spring Mills and, with his recent purchase of the former Gettig property, controls another 1,800 feet of railbed in the heart of Spring Mills. In May of 2015, Kunes presented plans to the Penns Valley Regional Planning Commission (PVRPC) for converting the Gettig property into a YMCA for Penns Valley. According to the brochure Kune's presented to PVRPC, Streamside Place includes a 13,400 square foot state of the art facility featuring a Wellness Center equipped with bikes, treadmills, ellipticals and free weights. Kunes hopes the new Y, slated to open in January of 2016, becomes a focal point for the revitalization of this scenic village once known as a resort town for its sinking springs, hence the name of this former stop on the L&T RR, "Sinking Springs."



# PENNS VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

## SPRING MILLS to WILDFLOWER LANE

### SINKING CREEK ROAD CROSSING



#### REINFORCED CROSSINGS

- 10' Concrete or Asphalt Crossing
- Bollards for Access Control
- Gate - As Per Landowner Need
- Landscaping / Buffers

#### RAIL TRAIL ALIGNMENT

- Follow Railbed
- 8' Gravel Surface
- ADA Accessible Route

#### ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT

- Follow Edge of Field
- 8' Gravel Surface
- New Trail Grading and Drainage
- ADA Accessible Route

#### PENNS VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

- Off-Road Trail Alignment
- 8' Gravel Trail
- ADA Accessible Route
- Interpretive Materials
- Invasive Control
- Habitat Enhancements

#### EXISTING RAILROAD BRIDGE

- 8' Gravel Trail Surface
- ADA Accessible Route
- Handrails

#### BRIDGE CROSSING - OPTION

- 6' X 135' Pedestrian Bridge
- ADA Accessible Route
- Handrails

#### AT GRADE CROSSING - OPTION

- 8' Gravel Surface
- Crosswalk with Bollards
- ADA Accessible Route

BSA / LA

Brian S. Asmus / Landscape Architecture



Not including Kunes purchase of the 1,800 feet of railbed on the Gettig parcel, the 10 foot wide two way shared use Spring Mills trail would include 1.7 miles of railbed between Old Gregg School and Wildflower Lane, with 1,070 feet on the Wise/Hill tract deeded to Gregg Township in lieu of fees for the subdivision off the Kauffman Farm, 4,500 feet on the Myers Farm, 1,800 feet of right of way on 2 parcels owned by Kunes, and the remainder on land owned by Gregg Township between Kune's land and Old Gregg School. If Gregg Township exercises its right of first refusal for the 4,050 feet of right of way on Kauffman's land west of Wildflower Lane, this segment will be approximately 2.5 miles long. The trail requires an at grade crossing where the bridge was removed over Sinking Creek Road, and a bridge across Sinking Creek in order to avoid properties owned by residents opposed to the trail along Long Lane. The prefabricated bridge would ford the creek across from the community ballfield, where handicapped parking spaces would be provided for trail users. A spur trail following the hillside path through the wooded area between the ball field and Old Gregg School would provide additional parking and restroom facilities at the school. As a trailhead, Old Gregg School has many uses that would be complementary to and benefit from the trail, including employees of anchor tenant Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO), community groups, a branch library, day care facility, vintage clothing shop, gymnasium, community kitchen and community meeting space, model train club, scouts groups, gymnastics and tumbling classes.

Interpretive opportunities on this trail include the Myers Farm's no till polyculture planting that increases soil health and carbon sequestration while reducing stormwater runoff in nearby Sinking Creek. Myers also worked with local scouts to install structures in Sinking Creek that increase stream flow and stabilize the streambank to reduce sedimentation in the creek. A spur connection to Muddy Paws Nature Center along Klines Road offers additional educational and interpretive opportunities.

Issues that still need to be resolved include:

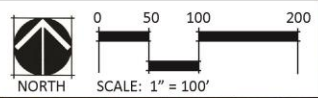
1. PA-DCNR and PA Game Commission biologist review of the L&T right of way through the Sinking Creek Prairie Natural Area
2. finalizing the alignment through the Myers Farm
3. securing additional trail easements from landowners.



# PENNS VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

## SPRING MILLS to WILDFLOWER LANE

### WILDFLOWER LANE - TRAIL TERMINUS



#### RETURN TO SINKING CREEK ROAD

- 6' Gravel Access Trail
- ADA Accessible Route
- Bollards and Crosswalk
- Landscaping and Street Trees



#### PENNS VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

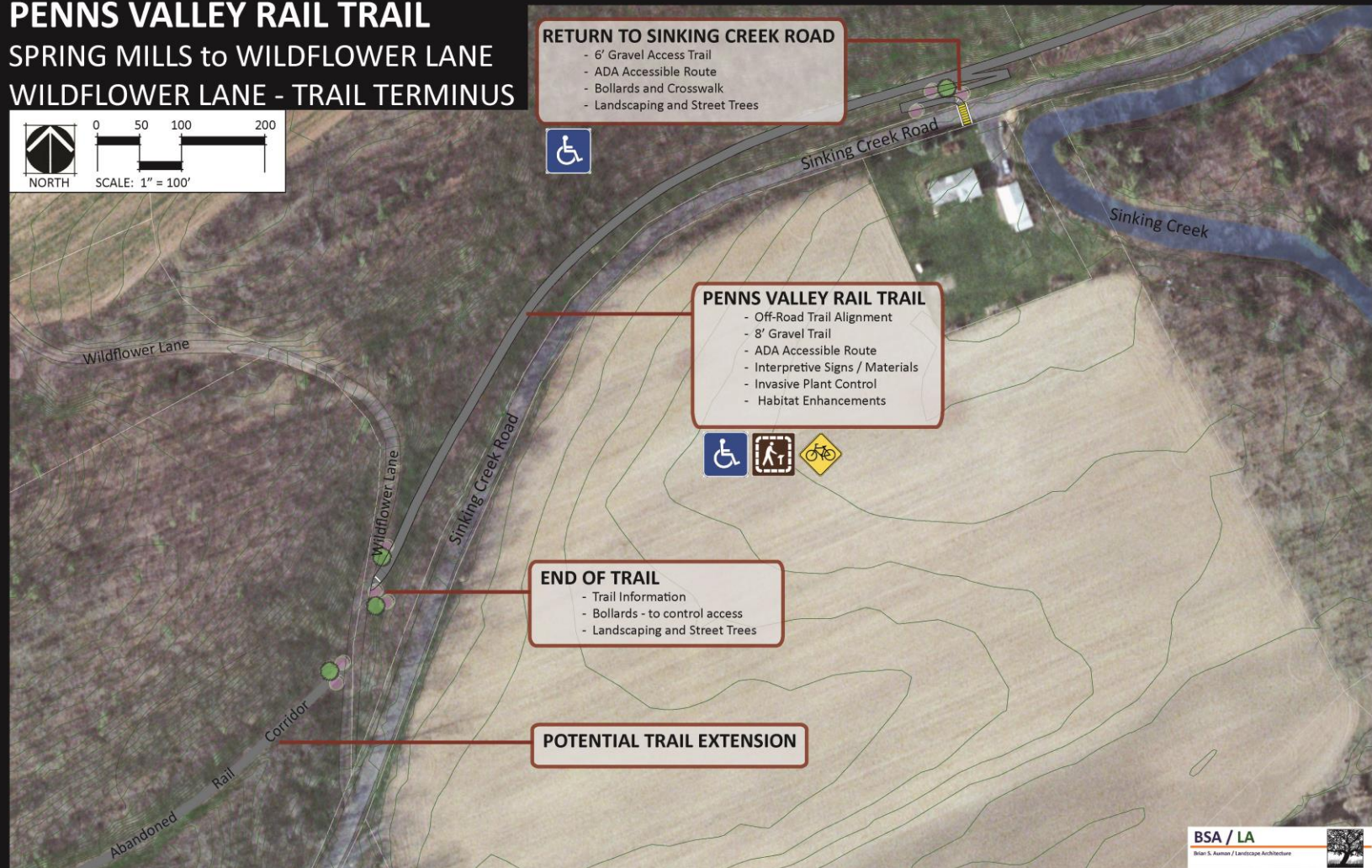
- Off-Road Trail Alignment
- 8' Gravel Trail
- ADA Accessible Route
- Interpretive Signs / Materials
- Invasive Plant Control
- Habitat Enhancements



#### END OF TRAIL

- Trail Information
- Bollards - to control access
- Landscaping and Street Trees

#### POTENTIAL TRAIL EXTENSION



BSA / LA

Brian S. Auman / Landscape Architecture



DRAFT

# GAP THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS BEYOND THE VALLEYS TRAIL

DISTANCE  
**10.09**  
miles

CLIMB  
1107 ft

**BEGINS IN:**  
**CREATED BY:** Glenn Vernon  
**DESCRIPTION:** This is a 10.09 mi route in . The route has a total ascent of 1107.39 ft and has a maximum elevation of 1,906.76 ft. This route was created by glennvernon on 05/22/2015. [View other maps that glennvernon has done or find similar maps.](#)  
**TYPE:** Bike Ride

AVAIL. POINTS  
**0**

ROUTE PRIVACY: FRIENDS

SHARE: [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Email](#)

**ACTIONS** PRINT SEND TO PHONE **BOOKMARK** EDIT



## CLIMB DETAILS

[Learn About Climb Ratings](#) [Download Data](#)

Rating	Start/End Points	Length	Start/End Elevation	Avg Grade
3	0.06 mi/2.38 mi	2.32 mi	1,098 ft/1,854 ft	6.2%

## THE GAP THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS BEYOND THE VALLEYS TRAIL

Although we have determined that the segment between Coburn and Ingleby is not feasible at this time due to neighbor's concerns that improving the railbed will bring increased pressure on an area already stressed beyond the capacity of existing infrastructure to support it, we recommend that DCNR continue to improve the railbed for public access on land east of Ingleby owned by the state in areas where it does not negatively impact the sensitive flora and fauna of the Penns Creek Conservation Area and the Penns Creek Hardwood Forest Natural Area. In particular, DCNR should continue to explore designating areas for hikers, equestrian riders and mountain bikers through Bald Eagle State Forest. Increasing access to state forest lands was one of the primary uses selected by 26% of respondents to our Trail User Preference Survey. That need was made even clearer in May of 2015 when Martha Futhey, a member of the study committee for this feasibility study, was thrown from her horse when a motorcycle revved its engine as it sped past her on Penns Creek Road. Futhey was flown by life flight to an area hospital, where she regained consciousness and continues to recover, but the accident places exclamation marks around the need for safe places where equestrians, bikers, hikers and wildlife watchers can travel as much as possible away from motorized vehicles. The change in DCNR leadership since this study began appears to be moving the Bureau in that direction.

On April 3, 2015, DCNR's new, yet to be confirmed Secretary Cindy Dunn issued a press release announcing that *"repair work will soon be starting in the area of the now-barricaded Poe Paddy Tunnel along Penns Creek."* The \$1.2 million project includes \$346,000 for mobilizations costs, gates and reshoring and resurfacing 2 miles of the railbed with aggregate to facilitate heavy construction vehicles reaching the site, \$125,000 for redecking the railroad trestle and associated bridge costs on the west side of the tunnel, and \$720,000 to reline the 306 foot long tunnel through West Paddy Mountain. The existing 6.5 foot diameter liner on the eastern end of the tunnel will be removed, and a new liner will be installed the entire length of the tunnel at a cost that equates to about \$2,400 per foot. The metal liner will leave space above the arch for bats that hibernate in the tunnel between October and May.

DCNR closed the tunnel in February of 2013, shortly after we met with them to discuss the rail trail project. Citing concerns about the safety of the tunnel and potential impacts on a proposed Penns Creek Wild Area, Amy Griffith, Bald Eagle State Forester, suggested an alternate route for the trail along existing forest roads (see map on previous page).



Although this alternate trail does not have the advantages of a dry, level, direct, and dedicated non-motorized route offered by a railbed that would benefit all trail users, it does provide a challenging route that many equestrians and serious mountain bike enthusiasts can use to avoid roads frequented by motorized vehicles. The 10 mile route Griffith suggested follows the Millheim to Siglerville Pike to the top of the ridge, and then makes a left onto Pine Swamp Road before joining Poe Paddy Road ending at Poe Paddy State Park. Although the Poe Paddy end of this segment already has adequate parking to handle many visitors, we recommend extending the trail at the west end to Paradise Road and constructing a trailhead large enough to accommodate horse trailers and several cars at Penn Township's maintenance yard at the intersection of Penns Creek Road and Paradise Road. Both trailheads should include signage describing trail conditions so users can decide if the trail is beyond their abilities. Based on mapping the route on **Map My Ride**, the *Gap through the Mountains Trail* climbs 1,107 feet, with a 2.32 mile climb starting at an elevation of 1,098 feet above sea level to an elevation of 1,854 feet at an average grade of 6.2% beginning .06 miles from the west end of the trail.

While this route honors neighbors request to avoid routing the trail through Coburn and Ingleby, it does not solve ongoing concerns that continue to plague that area. We recommend Township, County and State agency officials continue to meet with residents in those areas to address the problems residents shared with us at the neighborhood meeting, as well as the public's question about the safety of the Coburn Tunnel, which should be the first priority, since many anglers, outfitters and area residents continue to use the tunnel as a shortcut across the bend at the creek.